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CANTERBURY BOOKS

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# CHRIST IS GOD

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by

J. P. ARENDZEN, D.D.

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*SHEED AND WARD - NEW YORK*

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From *Whom Do You Say?* by J. P. ARENDZEN, D.D.  
published by Sheed & Ward, New York.

Nihil Obstat:

Joannes Gray  
*Censor Deputatus*

Imprimatur:

Georgius Mullan  
*Vic. Gen.*

Edimburgi,  
die Martii, 1927.

Manufactured in the United States of America

## CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I. CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT		
1.	<i>The Nature of the Proof for Christ's Divinity</i> .....	7
2.	<i>The Absence of a Technical Statement in the Gospels</i> .....	10
3.	<i>Divinity Implied in Christ's Way of Speaking</i> .....	12
4.	<i>Divinity Implied in Christ's Way of Working Miracles</i> .....	14
5.	<i>Christ's Claim to Forgive Sins</i> .....	17
6.	<i>Christ's Direct Claim to Equality with God</i> .....	18
7.	<i>Christ's Death for His Claim to Divinity</i> .....	25
8.	<i>The Testimony of the Apostles After the Resurrection</i> .....	28
II. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE		
1.	<i>The Definition of Chalcedon</i> .....	33
2.	<i>The Distinction between Person and Nature an Obvious Truth</i> .....	34
3.	<i>The Belief in Christ's Divinity Does Not Lessen Belief in His Humanity</i> .....	39
4.	<i>The Definition of Chalcedon Unalterable for All Time</i> .....	41

<b>III. THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY</b>	
1. <i>The Union Considered in Itself</i> .....	45
2. <i>Only the Second Person of the Trinity Is Man</i> .....	49
3. <i>God the Son Did Not Change at the Incarnation</i> .....	52
<b>IV. CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE</b>	
1. <i>Man's Threefold Knowledge</i> .....	54
2. <i>Christ's Possession of the Beatific Vision</i>	55
3. <i>Compatibility of Sorrow with the Beatific Vision</i> .....	57
4. <i>Christ's Infused Knowledge</i> .....	62
5. <i>Christ's Natural Human Knowledge</i> .....	63
6. <i>Christ's Knowledge of the Day of Judgment</i> .....	66
<b>V. CHRIST'S WILL</b>	
1. <i>Christ's Free Will and Temptation</i> .....	71
2. <i>Christ's Free Will and Merit</i> .....	73
3. <i>Christ's Free Will and the Father's Command</i> .....	75
4. <i>Christ's Omnipotence and the Prayer of Petition</i> .....	79
5. <i>The Agony in the Garden</i> .....	81
<b>VI. TWO PHRASES</b>	
1. <i>Christ's Cry on the Cross</i> .....	86
2. <i>Christ's Supposed Prediction of Immediate Return</i> .....	93

# I

## CHRIST'S DIVINITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### 1. *The Nature of the Proof for Christ's Divinity*

It is obvious to everyone that a direct proof in the sense of a demonstration from cause to effect, or effect to cause, is impossible in the case of the divinity of Christ. The union of the two natures in one person is clearly in itself incapable of demonstration, as it cannot be the object of our human experience. It is plain that all that can be done is to prove that Christ claimed to be God and that right reason leads us to accept that claim. The acceptance of any claim must rest on our acknowledgment of the veracity and trustworthiness of the claimant.

However overwhelmingly great the claim to divinity may be, it must rest on the same reasonable grounds. In the full rigour of the term we cannot prove the divinity of Christ in itself, but we can prove that Christ claimed divinity and that rational man ought to believe that claim. The proof of the truth of Christ's claim lies, then, along four lines.

- (1) The first consists in the mental and moral perfection of the Speaker who made the claim.
- (2) The second consists in the mighty miracles

which He wrought in endorsement of His claim. These miracles are such that they involve a divine approbation of the claim of Christ.

(3) The third consists in the sublimity of the revelation which Christ came to bring. This revelation could indeed have been brought by a mere messenger who was not God; but, given the divine origin of the message conveyed, there follows the trustworthiness of the claim made by the messenger concerning Himself.

(4) The last consists in the supernatural character of the Church Christ founded. The Church is the greatest organization for holiness and virtue ever known to the human race. It is based on the acceptance of Christ's claim to be God. If that claim were false, the most divine thing on earth would be the fruit of a lie. This is impossible, therefore the claim is true.

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Modern deniers of Christ's divinity realize that it would be in the highest degree impolitic to impugn the subjective veracity of Christ. They therefore suggest that, though sincere, He might be mistaken, or more frequently they maintain that He never laid claim to divinity at all.

The first suggestion, that Christ, though sincere, might be mistaken, is felt by most to be a somewhat feeble attack. A person who claims to be God and is mistaken in his claim is clearly insane. Now, no one, as far as I know, has dared directly to suggest that Jesus of Nazareth was not sane. There are limits to human audacity and limits also to human credulity; the suggestion that the Founder of Christianity was really a madman, who fancied himself God, transgresses

those limits. When modern unbelievers therefore suggest that Jesus of Nazareth, though sincere, might be mistaken, they do not include in his supposed mistakes a claim to divinity.

They only use the suggestion as an indirect argument, for if Christ was subject to error of any kind, he was certainly not God, for God cannot err.

There remains then, practically, only the one possible position for those who deny Christ's divinity: Christ was a good, holy and wise man, who taught sublime moral doctrines, but who never dreamt of claiming any divinity for himself. This was only gradually attributed to him after his death by over-fond disciples.

Against this modern position we have the task of proving that Christ did indeed claim to be the Son of God in the sense that He shares the divine nature of His heavenly Father and is truly God with the Father and the Holy Ghost. We have the task to show that the acceptance of Christ's divinity was not a slow and gradual process, completed only by those who were distant from Christ by many generations, but that His divinity was believed and proclaimed by those who were of His own generation and who could best judge of the validity of His claim.)

We have the task, finally, to show that belief in Christ's divinity always has been and now is of the essence of Christianity and the source of its innermost vitality, and that the rejection of this claim means the rejection of Christianity as the greatest imposture the world has known. Such rejection of Christianity is in absurd contradiction to the history of the world.

## 2. *The Absence of a Technical Statement in the Gospels*

Now, it has been a matter of surprise to some that the Four Gospels nowhere contain a simple, direct and categorical statement of Christ that He is God. There are readers of the Gospels who would almost expect the clear and bold assertion from Christ's lips: "I am God!" and there are some who triumphantly point out that though the disciples after His death may have called Him God, He himself never did so.

This surprise is born of a lack of understanding. The purpose of the Incarnation was not the glorification of Christ on earth, but the Redemption of man. Christ came to atone for our sins. Christ came to give a divine revelation from His Father Almighty; Christ came to give us an example of perfect manhood. Christ came to institute the means of grace in the Church which He founded. Christ did not come that during His human life upon earth He should receive divine homage. If, during His stay in this world, His divinity had been fully acknowledged and realized, one does not see how His gracious purpose could have been carried out.

The whole Gospel story is against the supposition that Christ during His earthly life required the acknowledgment and realization of His Godhead from all His disciples. He was born in a stable, He taught His people and worked miracles during three years and some months at the most, and then He was crucified. Surely in the story of this life it would be incongruous to demand that Christ during the whole length of His

public ministry should perpetually proclaim to all and sundry: "I am God. Adore Me!"

Having the course of centuries before Him, He was not anxious that during a year or some months of His mortal life, previous to His Resurrection, He should be surrounded by kneeling crowds offering Him divine adoration. (He knew that countless generations were to come, who were to adore His Godhead, and God knows of no hurry in carrying out His plans. Without uttering the disconcerting claim to unprepared minds:) "I am God," He was, as a perfect teacher, leading people themselves to draw the conclusion which He wished they should draw. He so spoke, He so behaved, He worked such miracles, that soon in His surroundings people said to one another: "Who is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him? He speaks as never man spoke before." During the three years of His mortal life He so led His disciples from truth to truth, that after His Resurrection and after His sending the Holy Ghost from above, these disciples acknowledged Him as God, and His followers throughout the world these two thousand years adored Him as the Only-begotten of the Father, one with Him in nature, glory and divinity. He carried out His purpose with infinite wisdom and in accordance with His own plans for our redemption, and in accordance with the frailty of our human nature.

Those people who marvel that He did not forthwith proclaim Himself God to His astonished apostles unconsciously betray their own childish conceptions. Amongst us men, when someone is higher in dignity than at first sight he seems to be, he is in perpetual

restlessness till the fact of his hidden greatness becomes known. Hungry for the homage of others, such a person is liable to anticipate the time of his due self-revelation by hinting at his true station. Human frailty may find it difficult to remain incognito for a day. (God, clothed in the lowly vesture of human nature, can afford to wait, till, through the workings of His grace, men of goodwill gradually, and without abnormal and catastrophic mental disturbance, come to realize His divine personality.)

### *3. Divinity Implied in Christ's Way of Speaking*

Christ spoke as only God would speak. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said to the people: "Ye have heard how it was said to those of old: Thou shalt not kill . . . Ye have heard how it was said to those of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery . . . Ye have heard how it was said to those of old: Thou shalt not forswear thyself . . . Ye have heard how it was said: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth . . . Ye have heard that it was said: Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. . . ." And then, after each of those references to the Old Law, Christ added, ("But I say unto you.") Thus He opposed His own personal authority to the authority of the Author of the Old Covenant. The first three quotations are direct from the Decalogue, which God Himself thundered from the height of Mount Sinai; the two following claimed likewise the authority of God, as being the Law which He gave to Moses. Christ does not comment on them as a rabbi would. He does not merely explain or enlarge them as a prophet might, claiming inspiration from

God. Christ does not use the ancient formula: "thus saith the Lord" or "the word of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet." No! His comment is: ("But I say unto you.") The Gospel text makes it perfectly clear that the emphasis was on the personal pronoun "I." The stress on His personal authority, as ultimate and divine, recurs again and again in the same sermon on the Mount. Read carefully the following: (Not every one that saith unto me) Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name, and by thy name cast out devils and by thy name do many mighty works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity. Everyone therefore that heareth these words of mine and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock . . . everyone that heareth these words of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. . . ."

Not only here, but throughout the Gospels, we are never allowed to forget that He who speaks could say: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: heaven and earth shall pass away, (but my word shall not pass away.) In fact, as the prophets of the past spoke in the name of God, so the prophets of the future were to speak in the name of Christ. This would be blasphemy unless Christ is God. (Open any part of the Old Testament and compare it with a page of the Gospels.) The prophets spoke as messengers in someone else's stead, Christ speaks in His own name, as if He himself possessed the pleni-

tude of divine authority, as if the Father's authority and His were identical.

No wonder that the Jews were amazed and said: "He speaks as no one has spoken before," and His enemies objected: "Thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Without making the direct statement: "I am God," Christ spoke in such a fashion that His hearers one and all realized that He took for granted such a relation between Himself and God, that, at least in some sense, God and He were the same.

#### *4. Divinity Implied in Christ's Way of Working Miracles*

When we consider His miracles we reach the same conclusion. Others have worked miracles before and after Christ, but Christ worked them by His own power. The leper came to Him and said: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He answered: "I will, be thou made clean." In fact He demanded faith in Himself from those for whom He worked His miracles. Two blind men followed Him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, thou Son of David," and Jesus said to them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yea, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith, be it done unto you." The centurion, who pleaded for his servant, said: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant shall be healed." Jesus said to him: "Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

The father of the boy with the deaf and dumb spirit

said to Jesus: "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." But Jesus replied indignantly: "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth." Straightway the father of the child cried out and said: "I believe; help thou my unbelief!" Then Jesus healed the child. It is abundantly clear that Christ demanded faith, not in the omnipotence of the God of Israel, but He demanded faith *in Himself*, as if all power was deposited in Him, and the miracle was the work of His own will. Amongst all the marvels done by saints and prophets, Christ's miracles stand out in this, that there is in them no appeal to a power outside Himself. It is not through prayer, that might be heard or refused; not as asking a favour, that He obtains this power, but He possesses it by right, and He demands from others faith in Himself. The storm on the lake begins while Christ is asleep in the boat. The disciples awaken Him and cry for help. He rebukes them: "O ye of little faith." He said to the storm: "Be still," and there was a great calm, and the disciples said: "Who is this, that the winds and the sea obey him?"

By acting as only God would act Christ led His own generation on to the gradual realization of His own personality, though it was in accordance with His plans that His followers should not come to the complete understanding of the mystery till He had risen from the dead and sent down the Spirit of Truth from heaven.

While thus teaching and working miracles He gradually unveiled His personality. He declared Himself greater than Solomon, than Jonas, than David. Yea,

Abraham had hoped to see His day; he saw it and was glad. Christ declared that He was Lord of the Sabbath, that He was the Expected One, described by Isaias the Prophet, whose name is Emmanuel, God with us; that John the Baptist was His forerunner, of whom it was foretold centuries in the past: "Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." Christ claimed to be the judge of the living and the dead, and that all creation shall pass before His throne. The final sentence of eternal doom to the wicked shall be: "Go away *from me*, ye cursed." To go away from Him was the same as to go away from God into everlasting darkness. He was the Son of God in some utterly unique sense. "All things," so He says, "have been delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son except the Father, neither doth any one know the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him." When Peter, in answer to the question: "Who do men say that I am?" after enumerating the errors of others, says: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Christ praises him with exuberant praise: "Blessed art thou, Simon bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven." The mere fact of Christ's Messiahship might easily be inferred from the fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament, but Peter had added: "the Son of the living God," and this could only be due to some direct miraculous knowledge given to him by the Father, who alone knows the Son.

### 5. *Christ's Claim to Forgive Sins*

Christ claimed a power which above all other powers is necessarily and intrinsically divine, the power of forgiving sins. For one creature to claim by his own power to forgive another creature's sin would be an idle and blasphemous usurpation, for sin is essentially an offence against the Creator, not merely an offence against a fellow creature. Only the person offended can forgive. Yet Christ forgives in such a way that it is plain that it is completely His own act. Hostile bystanders exclaim: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Christ does not deny the assertion, but proves by a miracle that He has the power to forgive sin, and then leaves them to their own conclusion.

(Nay, more, Christ forgives in response to love towards Himself, so that love towards Himself is the very measure of the sinner's title to forgiveness.) The Magdalen is forgiven much "because she loved much." The Pharisee received less because he loved Christ less. Unless Christ be God this would be a formal usurpation of a divine prerogative, meriting the punishment of Lucifer, who was cast headlong out of heaven for striving to be like unto God.

Christ claims, and His followers proclaim, that He possesses a unique prerogative unknown to any other man—He claims sinlessness. "Go away from me, Lord, for I am but a sinful man," cried St. Peter, contrasting his own mere humanity with the holiness of Christ. "Who of you shall convince me of sin?" said Christ

to His foes. Christ forgives sin, but He Himself never asks forgiveness or even betrays any fear for His own human frailty, as if sin and Himself had nothing in common, so that those that believed in Him said: "He became like unto us in all things except in sin."

He, the sinless One, sets Himself up as the model of manhood and the refuge of men. "Learn of me." "Come to me, ye who are laden and heavily burdened, and I shall give you rest." Nay, more, His followers must love Him above all things. "If anyone love father or mother, wife or child, more than me, he is not worthy of me." To the man who asked delay to bury his father He answered, "Let the dead bury their dead, do thou come and follow me." To the rich young man: "If thou wilt be perfect, sell whatever thou hast and give it to the poor and follow me!" "He that confesses me before men I shall confess him before my Father, who is in heaven. He that denies me before men, I shall deny him before my Father, who is in heaven." The salvation of mankind is entirely bound up with Him; there is no hope for men but in Him. In the day of judgment He will give to everyone according to his works.

## *6. Christ's Direct Claim to Equality with God*

Thus did Christ lead His followers on to ever deeper understanding of Himself, though some were more sluggish of mind than others. Philip asked, the evening before Christ died: "Lord, show us the Father; and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him: "Have I been so long a time with you and have you not known me?

Philip, he that seeth me seeth the Father also. How sayest thou: Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?"

Sometimes Christ directly suggested an act of faith in Himself and accepted worship. The man born blind who was cured by Christ was met by Christ after he was cast out of the synagogue, and Christ said: "Dost thou believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said: "And who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "Thou hast both seen him and he it is that speaketh with thee." And he said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped Him.

Twice we read that the Jews took up stones to stone Jesus when His words implied a claim to divinity. "Thou art not yet fifty years old," said they to Christ, "and hast thou seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." Not: "I was," but "I am," for God lives in the everlasting present and knows of no past or future. Jesus re-echoed the word of God to Moses in the burning bush: "I AM WHO AM." The Jews understood and attempted to inflict on Him death for blasphemy.

At another time when Christ said: "I and the Father are one," the Jews again took up stones to stone Him, saying: "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Jewry has never really forgotten Christ's claim. The Modernist idea that Christ merely claimed to be God's prophet and spokesman, or at most the Messias, was unknown to the Jews of old. Jesus of Nazareth was

put to death because he was a blasphemer; such is the tradition of Jewry, which has survived until this day.)

Indeed Christ died upon the Cross for the claim He had made. The Sanhedrin condemned Him for blasphemy. The Sanhedrin condemned Him for the statement He made about Himself. "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said: "I am." The claim to mere Messiahship, however foolish and blameworthy, was not blasphemy in Jewish eyes, but Christ's claim went far beyond that. He identified Himself with "the Son of Man" spoken of in the Prophet Daniel. Now we read in Daniel vii that thrones were set in heaven for God and for this Son of Man.

Christ clearly implied in numberless sayings that His dignity was divine and He repeated it once more before the high priest: "Ye shall see the Son of man, sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Both expressions, *the Blessed* and *the Power*, are well-known Jewish terms for God, whose name Jews scrupulously avoided pronouncing.)

Before Pontius Pilate, indeed, the Jews at first prefer a political charge of claiming to be a king, but soon their real grievance appears: "We have a law, and according to that law he has to die, because he made himself the Son of God."

Christ's contemporaries were the best judges of the meaning of His words. They judged, and they judged well, that the divine sonship which Christ claimed necessarily involved blasphemy, if it were not true. Orthodox Jews of today have not changed. The present writer, not long ago, spoke to a Jew from Poland, who bluntly and without any hesitation whatever said to

him: (My people put your Christ to death, and they did well, for he made himself God.) The natural answer was given: "Yes, they did well, if He were not God."

Now over and above those texts which assert the divinity of Christ by implication there remain a number of statements which directly contain the assertion of His divinity.

"I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones! Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me by my Father. And no one knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither doth any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him. Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened: and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi, 25-28.)

If all is given by the Father to the Son, and if therefore Father and Son do alone interpenetrate one another by mutual knowledge, and if no one can know the Father except the Son reveal Him, then, if the Father is God, the Son is also, and the Son is Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to evade the assertion of infinite understanding and therefore infinite knowledge and divine equality with God the Father in this text.

Let us consider Christ's encounter with the Jews in Solomon's porch, told in John x, 24-39.

"My sheep," said Christ, "hear my voice. And I know them: and they follow me. And I give them life everlasting, and they shall not perish for ever. And no man shall pluck them out of my hand. That which my Father hath given me is greater than all: and no one

can snatch them out of the hand of the Father. I and the Father are one.) The Jews then took up stones to stone Him. Jesus answered them: "Many good works I have shown you from my Father. For which of those works do you stone me?" The Jews answered Him: "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."

Here surely is the issue clearly stated. If Christ did not claim to be God, it was His supreme duty immediately to repudiate with scorn the blasphemous suggestion, and say: "I do not make myself God. That horrible accusation of the greatest crime a creature is capable of, the crime which would put him on a level with the lowest devil in hell, for Lucifer was hurled from heaven for claiming to be like unto God, that accusation I fling aside as an infamous, damnable lie!" And instead of this, what does Christ answer? "Is it not written in your law: I said, you are gods? If then he called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken; and the scripture cannot be broken: do you say of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world: Thou blasphemest; because I said: I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not, but if I do, though you will not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in the Father."

The Jews took this to be a reiteration of His claim, for we read: "They sought therefore to take him; and he escaped out of their hands."

Indeed, Christ in their eyes only intensified His offence. He said that God was in Him and He in God,

that the works of God were His own works, and His own works God's works; that He was the Son of God in some higher way than the prophets of old could be called gods, because the word of God was spoken to them; that God, His Father, had sanctified Him; as if the cry of the Thrice-Holy of the Seraphim was meant for Him as it was meant for God, His Father, who had sent Him into this world. He claims that He can give "life everlasting" to those that follow Him; that they are utterly in His hand as they are in the hand of God His Father, for the Father gave Him what is greater than all things. Nothing indeed is greater than all things, except it be the Godhead, and therefore He said: "I and the Father are one." If human words still have any meaning, the Speaker in Solomon's porch claimed equality with God, and when His foes taunted Him He repeated His claim. What Christ thus maintained amongst those that hated Him, He, the evening before He died, maintained amongst those that loved Him, yet understood Him so little.

Thus He spoke: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. I shall go and prepare a place for you, and I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be. And whither I go, you know, and the way you know." Thomas said to him: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would doubtless have known my Father also, and from henceforth you shall know him and you have

seen him." Philip said to him: "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him: "Have I been so long a time with you and have you not known me? Philip, he that seeth me, seeth the Father also. How sayest thou, show us the Father! Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself. But the Father, who abideth in me, he doth the works. Believe you that I am in the Father and the Father in me? Otherwise believe for the very works' sake!"

Surely, in the intimate company of His own friends the night before His death, Jesus did not deceive those whom He loved. But if Jesus was but a creature and the Father was God, could words have been chosen more cruelly deceiving than these? A disciple asks: "Show us God!" And Jesus answers: "Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known me? He that seeth me, seeth God also!" How can this be unless Christ is God even as the Father is? Only then does he that sees Jesus see His Father also.

When finally Christ left this world and bade farewell to those whom He had chosen, He said: "To me is given all authority in heaven and upon earth; therefore go and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Could He have commanded them to baptize into the One Name of God and of two others, who were not God? Is not the inclusion of Himself with the Father under one Name the plainest assertion of His own divinity?

## 7. *Christ's Death for His Claim to Divinity*

Finally there remains the unshakable historical truth that Jesus of Nazareth died on the Cross, not for any particular point of His moral teaching, but exclusively for the claim which He set up concerning Himself. If there be any truth at all, it is this. Read all the Four Gospels, they are unanimous. If Christ did not die for supposed blasphemy—namely, for maintaining immediately before His death in the presence of His judges that He was the Son of God, then the Gospels are valueless and we possess no written record of the life and death of Jesus at all. Let us take the text of St. Mark, who is supposed to represent the first and most original record of Christ's life. Many witnesses had been brought, but their testimony did not agree. Christ kept utter silence. "The high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am, and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy, what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death."

Now, there is no scholar who does not know that *The Blessed* and *The Power* were the common Jewish designation for God; there is no scholar who doubts

that Christ refers to Daniel's prophecy, in which thrones (in the plural) are set in heaven, upon one of which the Ancient of Days, the eternal God, is seated, when One like a Son of Man is brought to Him to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom over all the nations. Christ then claims to be God's own Son, destined to sit in His manhood by God's side on His throne on the clouds of heaven. Words cease to have meaning, if Christ's words do not mean that.

And so they were understood by those who purposely elicited them by their question and who first heard them with their own ears. By unanimous vote they condemned the speaker for blasphemy. The mere claim to be the Messias, however rash and absurd they may have thought it, was not blasphemy. Many before and after have claimed to be the Messias, but none were thought blasphemers. Bar Cochba, a hundred years later, was a claimant to Messiahship, and the bulk of the Jews accepted his claim. When he failed they called him a liar, not a blasphemer. Christ in their eyes had blasphemed. He claimed to be God's Son. But according to them God could have no son. To their ears it sounded horrid blasphemy that God should generate and have a Son, and beget a second god in heaven. To them it sounded blasphemy that anyone should claim to sit with God on His throne on the clouds of heaven, as if he were God's equal. That is why the high priest rent his garments, why there was no further need of any witnesses. That utterance ended the trial. They had all heard it, and they all condemned Him to death.

Next morning before Pontius Pilate they at first

brought a number of accusations of a political character, Christ stirred up the people, He forbade them to pay taxes, He made himself king; but when Pilate persisted in his endeavour to release Him, and they thought He would slip through their hands, they brought the true accusation at last: "We have a law, and according to that law he has to die because he made himself the Son of God!" Now when Pilate heard this saying, he feared the more. Clearly Pilate grasped the meaning of the Jewish accusation well. To his superstitious pagan mind the claim to be a son of god did not sound so incredible; there might be some divinity about this Galilean! His selfish dread of denunciation to the emperor finally overcame his religious scruples and he surrendered Christ to the Cross.

Christ then died because He claimed to be the Son of God, in the sense that He shared His nature and was His equal, who would sit with Him on His throne in heaven.

Now, Christ foretold both His death and His resurrection, and He kept His word. Having died on the Cross, He rose again from the dead on the third day, as He had foretold.

Hence we believe that He is what He said He was, the Son of God, who sits at the right hand of His Father Almighty. His tomb was thrown open, His body was gone, He rose from the dead and appeared to many; indeed, to as many as five hundred at once. He not only appeared to them, but He spoke with them, He let them touch and handle Him. He ate and drank with them, and for forty days moved amongst them, speaking to them concerning the kingdom of God.

Having risen from the dead, He has a right that men should believe Him to be what He claimed to be—the claim for which He willingly underwent the torments of the Cross and the agony of death. Those that refuse to believe, sin against right reason, they sin against God and against His only-begotten Son.

The vague portrait of some saintly Dreamer in Palestine, who taught sublime ethical principles of moral conduct, but was too humble to lay any claim to aught but simple manhood, is a childish caricature of the real Nazarene, a caricature inspired by a desire to avoid the acknowledgment of Christ's divinity without seeming to attack the moral rectitude of the Prophet of Galilee.

#### *8. Testimony of the Apostles after the Resurrection*

The disciples after Christ's Resurrection grasped the full import of Christ's words, and even Thomas sank upon his knees before his risen Master, saying: "Oh, my Lord and my God!"

If we turn from the Gospel record itself to the remainder of the New Testament, we find there the expression of the conviction of those who were best able to know what Jesus of Nazareth claimed, and who in very truth He was. No doubt the claims of Jesus were rejected by many of the Jews, but they were also accepted by many, the leaders of whom preached their faith throughout the world and sealed it with their blood, thus founding the Catholic Church, which remains with us today after nineteen hundred years.

St. John began his Gospel and summed up his faith in the words: "the Word was God . . . and the Word

became flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we have seen His glory, as of the Only-begotten of the Father."

St. Peter, in the beginning of his first epistle, spoke of Christians as "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ." To Peter, therefore, Father, Christ, and Spirit were the One God, even as they are to us.

St. Paul, closing the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, wishes to all "the grace of Our Lord Jesus, the charity of God and the communication of the Holy Ghost," for, as he said, they had all "one body and one Spirit, one Lord and one faith, one God and Father"; though they had "diversities of graces," they had "the same Spirit, diversities of ministries, but the same Lord, diversities of operations but one God"; "the Spirit himself gave testimony that they were heirs indeed of God and joint-heirs of Christ," "for Our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God and our Father" had loved them. To them indeed had "appeared the goodness of God our Saviour, who saved them through the renovation of the Holy Ghost, who was poured out through Jesus Christ Our Saviour." To St. Paul, therefore, Father, Christ, and Spirit were the One God, even as they are to us. And what wonder, for Christ Himself, according to St. Matthew's Gospel, had sent the Apostles to baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Now, it would be folly to think that Christ sent His apostles to baptize into the one name of God and of two other persons, who were not God. The words of baptism would be a blasphemous formula unless Father, Son and Spirit were the One God; no one has

doubted, or could doubt, that by the Son is meant Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Jude the Apostle, the brother of James, writes against those who "turned the grace of our God into riotousness, and denied the only Sovereign and Lord of us, Jesus Christ," and he reminds his hearers that "Jesus, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, destroyed them that believed not, and the angels who kept not their principality, He reserved unto the judgment of the great day." To St. Jude, therefore, Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, who brought the Jews out of bondage and who is the God of the Angels who fell in the beginning of time.

Who then are the men of today who claim to understand the mind of Jesus better than His disciples Peter, John, Thomas, Matthew, Jude and Paul?

In recent years the attempt has been made to prove that when the Apostles called Christ *Kyrios*, "Lord," this title should not be understood as strictly connected with divinity.

The fact, however, remains that in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was the book which outside Palestine was the only Bible people could understand, *Kyrios* is the ordinary rendering for Jehovah, and that for Jews in Palestine *Adonai*, which means "Lord," was likewise the normal name for the God of Israel. Even in our English versions, "the Lord," when used in the Old Testament, simply means God. It is unnatural therefore to suppose that when the Apostles and early Christians spoke of Jesus as "the Lord" they did not really mean to ascribe divinity to Him. In Pagan

circles they spoke of *Kyrios* Serapis, the god Serapis, and if even the Roman emperors were called *Kyrioi*, "Lords," we must not forget that those were the times of emperor-worship, when almost every Greek city had a temple to Rome and the emperor. Emperors were said to become gods after their deaths. Well-known is the contemptuous remark of the dying emperor, who said of himself: "Oh, I am becoming a god," *deus fio*. What Jehovah was to the Jew of the Old Testament, that Jesus was to the Christian. In the Acts of the Apostles the word *Kyrios* occurs some one hundred and ten times. In a third of them it refers unmistakably to God, in a third directly to Jesus, in a last third it refers to God or to Jesus Christ. The term is clearly used indiscriminately of God and of Jesus. Again and again it is impossible to decide whether "the Lord" refers to God or to Jesus, or to both, so imperceptibly does the discourse pass from one to the other, so closely identified is the Lord Jesus with the Lord God. As Christ on Calvary had said: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," so St. Stephen when dying said: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," "Lord Jesus, lay not this sin to their charge." What Jesus said to God His Father, St. Stephen said to Jesus. St. Peter applies on Pentecost day the text of the Old Testament prophet Joel: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" to Jesus. For Peter, therefore, the name of Jesus is the name of God.

"Let all the house of Israel know most certainly," said Simon Peter, "that God hath made both Lord and

Christ this same Jesus whom you have crucified." It was not sufficient for Israel to believe that Jesus was the Christ, they must needs believe that He was "the Lord," invested with the title which was the common word which the Jew gave to God.

But why waste words? The Apostles and their disciples glorified Jesus as God, with the Father and the Holy Ghost; on their lips these three names, though signifying different persons in some sense, yet stood for the one God, Creator of heaven and earth; all their words and deeds would become incoherent and unintelligible if they held the Father only to be really God, and Christ and the Holy Ghost mere creatures of His hand.

## II

### STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE

#### 1. *The Definition of Chalcedon*

In the year A.D. 451 on the 22nd day of October the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon, consisting of some six hundred bishops, under the Presidency of the Legates of Pope Leo I, decreed in its fifth session as follows:

The Council sets itself against those who endeavour to divide the mystery of the Incarnation into a duality of sons, it excludes from participation in the sacred mysteries those who dare to declare that the Godhead of the only-begotten one is passible, and it withstands those who imagine a mingling or a confounding of the two natures in Christ, it casts out those who in folly assert that the form of a servant, taken from us, is of a celestial nature, or of some nature different from ours, it declares anathema those who have invented the myth that before the union there were two natures in the Lord, but that after the union there is only one.

Following, then, the Holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach and proclaim, that we confess Jesus Christ, our Lord, to be one and the selfsame son, perfect regarding His Godhead, and perfect also regarding His manhood, the selfsame to be verily God

and verily man, out of a rational soul and a body; of the same substance with the Father as regards His Godhead and the selfsame of the same substance with us as regards His manhood, with regard to all things, like unto us, except sin.

Before the ages He was indeed begotten of the Father as regards His Godhead but in the latter days the selfsame was on account of us and of our salvation born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, as regards the manhood. One and the selfsame is acknowledged to be Christ, Son, only begotten, in two natures, without confusion, without division, without separation, for the difference of natures is no way taken away through the Union, but rather what is proper to either nature is preserved, and is united into one person and one subsistence (*hypostasis*) and He is not parted or divided into two persons, but One and the selfsame Son, and only begotten, God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ. This of old the prophets spoke concerning Him and He Himself the Lord Jesus Christ taught us and the creed of the Fathers also has handed down.

These things then being formulated with the utmost precision and care possible, the holy and ecumenical synod defines that it is not lawful for any one to propose any other belief or to teach it to others.

## 2. *The Distinction between Person and Nature an Obvious Truth*

It has often been said, but without justification, that the Catholic Church in expressing the mystery of the

Incarnation has bound herself to the terms of ancient philosophy, and that as the old philosophy has passed away, the phraseology of the ancient councils has become simply meaningless to the modern man.

This is a complete misconception. The doctrine of the Incarnation rests on the distinction between nature and person. In Christ there are two natures, the divine and the human, but only one person, that of God the Son, the Second person of the Blessed Trinity. The explanation of the mystery is beyond the greatest intellect, but the meaning of the mystery is intelligible to the simplest child.

Every child spontaneously arrives at the knowledge of the distinction between nature and person. Imagine that we come across a child in the dark, hold it, handle it, pass our hands over its features and body and ask: "What is that? Is that a big doll?" The answer will come: "No, it is a little boy, it is a little girl." Supposing we alter our question and ask, not, "What is that?" but "Who is that?"; the child will spontaneously answer with its own personal name: "I am John, I am Mary." By its answer the child has proved that it knew that in the first case it was asked for its nature and in the second for its person.

Practically every human language, though spoken by barbarians, betrays by an elaborate system of different pronouns, personal, relative and demonstrative, that the distinction of nature and person is continually in its thought. On this primæval human knowledge the terms of the mystery of the Incarnation are based. They are independent of all philosophy. They are based on a primary fact of human consciousness.

Every man is fully aware that, though his fellow men share something with him, they are not he. They share with him his nature, but not his person. They are *what* he is, but they are not *who* he is.) A man's personality is essentially incommunicable to another person. Personality is something one and indivisible. As a matter of fact in many languages it is expressed simply by the number "One." Someone, quelqu'un, einer, and so on. It is just the one unity, from which all other unities in human knowledge are derived.

People may sometimes refer to a double personality—an acute case of Jekyll and Hyde—but on a moment's reflection it becomes clear that in such a case the word is only used in a derivative and metaphorical sense. As persons are known to their fellows by the sum of those characteristics by which they are perceptibly distinct from their neighbours; their characteristics and qualities are sometimes roughly referred to as their *personality*. The whole tragedy of Jekyll and Hyde lies precisely in the fact that Jekyll and Hyde are really one and the same person, though there were two sets of characteristics of a man—that of a sedate and respectable doctor and that of a criminal debauchee.

The first and radical meaning of person is that incommunicable something by which I am I and you are you. That is not our nature, for we have that in common but another factor in reality, by which intelligent beings are individualized.

The concept of personality is such a primary one that it is difficult to find another term for it, or to describe it in other words. Such is the case with a

primary ideas. A person might be described as "an individual with an intelligent nature." Dogs and plants and stones are not persons, because they do not think. That which makes a rational nature numerically one, indivisible and uncommunicable makes it a person.

When such primary concepts are long meditated upon and deeply studied a number of difficult philosophical problems arise, but these do not concern us now; they have no immediate and necessary bearing on the dogma of the Incarnation; they deal with the how and the why of the distinction between nature and person, not with the fact of the distinction itself.

Even the man in the street, John Jones, innocent of all philosophy, would say: "I am I, *not* because I am a man, for there are other men besides myself, *but* because, being a man, I am John." An ordinary man applies these primary notions readily to the mystery of the Incarnation. He would say to himself: "If I could meet Our Blessed Lord and ask Him the question: "Who are you?" Our Blessed Lord would answer: "I am God the Son made man for you"; and I would sink upon my knees and adore, saying: "My Lord and my God!" If I could ask Him again: "What, then, is this human form I see before me, is it a vision, a phantom, a mere veil thrown over the glory of Your Godhead?" He would answer: "No, for even that is also I Myself, for, being eternally God, I have become man, and this nature is My own. I am man like you with flesh and blood, with body and soul, though I have not ceased to be the Son, who is with the Father and the Spirit, I who am God, world without end." Then would the

simple man, in loving adoration, gaze upon the human face of the Only-begotten of the Father and again say: "O my Lord and my God!"

Such is the act of faith easily elicited by the minds of the learned and the simple, natural to children as well as to the aged, independent of the knowledge of any system of philosophy.

Yet a mystery the Incarnation will always remain. How one single person can possess two natures, leaving those natures complete and unchanged and yet holding them both in the unity of his single personality, how the infinite God, remaining immutable, infinite, eternal, can in time assume a created human nature, with mind and body, heart and soul as His very own, so that Jesus Christ is true man and true God, how all this is possible no one on earth during his mortal life can know.

On earth we only know of the union of one person with one nature, for nature and person together constitute the only individuals we know. That one individual should possess two natures has no parallel on earth and is beyond all experience. It is utterly unique. That a finite and created individual could possess two natures may well be doubted, but we are dealing with an infinite, eternal, uncreated person, and that He could assume another nature unto Himself, who can gainsay? But how it can be done and the manner of the union is beyond our understanding.

His human nature was human, completely, fully and only human. His divine nature was God. Neither His human nor His divine nature is a compound of humanity and divinity. Neither nature has "another side" to it. There are two natures, which are, as natures,

totally distinct, but there is one single person which actuates, or holds, or possesses both natures, and gives them being.

### 3. *The Belief in Christ's Divinity Does Not Lessen Belief in His Humanity*

The plea has been entered that such a belief concerning Christ takes away all real humanity from Our Lord. If Our Lord really knew during the whole of His life on earth that He was really God, His human life was a make-believe, it was utterly unlike ours and can in no way be an example to us. We should in no way understand Him, and He would seem to us a monstrous amalgam of divinity and humanity.

(This plea fails on many counts.) First, because it overlooks the fact that the Incarnation is a mystery, and that in consequence any hope to comprehend it in its fulness is for us on earth out of the question. We understand the terms in which it has been revealed, we fully understand the truth as enunciated, we know the fact, but how the fact takes place we know not. It is this impatience at being unable to fathom the mystery which leads people to dismiss it.

Secondly, people are led in these matters more by their imagination than by their understanding. Their inability to picture to themselves the state of Christ's soul leads them to deny what they cannot imagine.

Lastly, the plea betrays a confusion of thought. The incongruity of a man knowing himself God is removed if we state the truth clearly. It is God, who in His human nature knows that He is man. Christ is not a man in the sense of being a man only, for this would

imply a separate, distinct human personality (but Christ has no personality, other than the personality of God the Son.) We never say that *a man* became God, but that God became man. Christ's nature was truly human, His mind, His will, His memory, His senses, His body, all were really, truly human, and there is no amalgam whatever in Christ's human nature itself, though this nature is placed and maintained in its individual reality by the Person of God the Son.

In the Gospels Christ betrays purely human consciousness. Obviously. How could Christ be man unless He had purely human consciousness? But this manhood was God's own manhood, which He had assumed unto Himself that He might be man and dwell amongst us. This does not mean that there must have mingled in the stream of consciousness of His mind the mighty stream of His consciousness as God. If the metaphor may be followed: Those two streams do not mingle, but they come from the same source, and they both know the source whence they come, they both belong to the same personality. If we start with Christ as a man with a human personality and then superimpose on this man some divine consciousness, we come to the gross folly of imagining Christ as a human being, who knows that he is a human person, and yet has it at the back of his head all the time that he is God also. Obviously this travesty of the truth repels. (When, however, we start from the truth that Christ is God, it is seen to be imperative that even in His human nature He must have known who He was.)

This knowledge we ourselves cannot reconcile with ordinary manhood, in the sense that we have no ex-

perience of any manhood that is not subsisting in a mere human personality, and we cannot either imagine or understand *how* such knowledge would affect a human soul. But we are most emphatically able to understand that there is nothing intrinsically impossible in such a union of two natures in one person, and that the knowledge of His divine Personality is not irreconcilable with the knowledge of His human nature. If we said that Christ knew He was man and at the same time knew that He was not really man but God, this would be an intolerable self-contradiction. When, however, we say that Christ knew that He was man, but also knew that His manhood did not ultimately subsist in a human self, but in a Divine Person, we are indeed speaking in mysteries but not in contradictions, and we in no way lessen the truth and completeness of that manhood.

To assert, as some have done, that if Christ knew His own Godhead, He could be no example to us men is a denial of history. The Christ of Chalcedon has as a matter of fact been the pattern and example of myriads of men and women for fifteen centuries. The saints of old were in no way hindered, but in every way helped and stimulated, by the thought that Jesus was both true God and true man, that in imitating Jesus they were not imitating a mere man, however holy, but the infinite perfection of God Himself in human nature.

#### *4. The Definition of Chalcedon Unalterable for All Time*

Every definition of a revealed truth must in a sense be a confession of bankruptcy. The whole reason for revelation is the insufficiency of the human mind. If the

human mind were completely competent to ascertain the truth revealed, divine revelation would be an idle and foolish process. (The only reason why an Infinite Intelligence should reveal some fact to a finite created intelligence is that the created one would not, or could not, have ascertained it of itself.)

Even we men amongst ourselves regard it as an empty procedure to tell our fellows what they know already. The giving of information is normally based on the conviction of the ignorance of the party informed. Everyone who accepts information of another confesses bankruptcy, for one is not informed of a thing that is self-evident, but of a thing confessedly unknown.

True, the Infinite Intelligence communicating with a finite one may do so although the finite intelligence left to itself might under certain circumstances and after a series of efforts have obtained the information for itself. It may simply anticipate the acquisition of knowledge, or through revelation make it accessible to the bulk of men, who otherwise would not have ascertained it as a matter of fact.

But the Infinite Intelligence may also communicate truths which a finite intelligence could never have ascertained by its unaided efforts, and which even after revelation remain beyond man's comprehension. In other words, the meaning of the statement itself may be grasped, and the fact itself lie revealed, but *how* or *why* the fact is cannot be understood. Even with regard to merely natural truths there are numberless facts, which we acknowledge as true, but *how* and *why* they

are true—completely escapes our understanding. Indeed, there is an old saying: *Omnia exeunt in mysterium*: (All answers to questions end in a question!) Definitions of the Church are the correct statement of the thing revealed. They are in no way explanations. In that sense Chalcedon was a triumph for all time. Chalcedon was a confession of bankruptcy, precisely because it was the correct statement of a mystery.

The Incarnation is the union of two terms, of which one is infinite, the other finite. No union can be fully understood except by understanding *both* its terms and seeing in the terms themselves the reason of their mutual relation. Therefore, to explain the Incarnation to a finite intelligence is a manifest impossibility. Any-one who foolishly claims to give a complete explanation of the Incarnation cannot but begin by stating it inaccurately; for, if stated accurately, it is of necessity inexplicable.

Must we then apply to the Incarnation the famous saying: *Credo quia impossibile*—I believe it because it is impossible? No, certainly not. The case of Christ is indeed unique, it is completely beyond the field of our experience; but it remains within the limits of the possible. Christ's human nature in the very first moment of its existence received the individual subsistence, the Personality of the Word, which was from all eternity. This is not impossible.

It is not enough to say either that God was in Christ, or that Christ is the Supreme Manifestation of God. Both expressions can, of course, be understood in a true sense. But they hide an ambiguity.

God was not *in* Christ. (Christ is God,) for He is a divine Person having a human nature.

Christ is not the Supreme *manifestation* of God. Christ's Person is not a manifestation of God at all. He is God Himself. Christ's human nature could not in any event be a *supreme* manifestation, for there can be no supreme manifestation of the Infinite except within the Trinity to Himself.

The Incarnation cannot be explained so as to leave no residue of mystery. The effort to understand it always better, to search and to crave for more light, is not only natural but laudable and fruitful of great religious benefits. It is a noble thing, befitting a man and a Christian. On the other hand, to live in the feverish hope of encompassing it all and understanding it through and through is like the effort of a child running fast in the hope that he may catch the ends of the rainbow. There is no bar to progress in reflecting on the mystery, but the first postulate for progress is to start from a definite point. Rome does not shrink from theological development. This is based on the fact that she starts with a given, an unalterable, statement of the doctrine. Without authoritative statement as to what is really revealed, no study of revelation can begin.

### III

## THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY

In the last chapter we set forth the bare facts involved in the truth of the Incarnation, as taught and defined by the Catholic Church. We now wish to go further and study in more detail the facts which God has deigned to reveal, that our study may bring us to a greater appreciation, and truer conception of the Mystery, so graciously made known to us by God's wisdom and mercy. Our task is fourfold. We must study the mystery of the Union itself, the Union of two natures in one Person or Hypostasis. We must study Christ's human nature thus united to God, and as human nature manifests itself in knowledge and will, we must study first the human knowledge and then the human will of Christ. Finally, as the Hypostatic Union is an everlasting one, continuing in heaven, we must see what it involves with regard to Christ's glorified humanity, in which He now sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

### 1. *The Union Considered in Itself*

Starting from the fact that Christ is one Person in two natures, how have we to conceive, express, and picture to ourselves that ineffable Union? We have no idle wish to invade the mystery itself, we only wish to

state as truly and adequately as we may, what it is that God has revealed. There is no parallel to the Hypostatic Union within our experience, but we may look for some analogies serving to make clearer what our Faith teaches us about the Hypostatic Union.

As an illustration which may throw some light on the union of the two natures in Christ we might use the well-known custom of engrafting, practised on trees. Supposing a beautiful rose is engrafted on a common briar, the tree will produce its own simple flowers, but along with them beautiful roses also. Or supposing a pear tree is engrafted on an apple tree, it will bear both apples and pears. That means that it will have a twofold kind of life and nature, but there will be only one tree. The pears on that apple tree will live by the life of the apple tree, for there is but one tree, and one set of roots, and one source of life. Thus the very life of the apple tree will course through the pears, though they are not apples but pears. The pears owe the fact of their life and existence to the apple tree. There is but one thing they have not in common with the apples; that is—forgive the expression—their pear-nature, their pear-hood.

If by an effort of the imagination we endow our apple tree with intelligent consciousness, and fancy we touch the tree by one of the pears and ask, Who are you? our fairy tree would answer: I am the apple tree; if we ask: What then are you, the answer would be, I am the pear you touch, but I am also the apple which you might touch with the other hand. The fact is, I possess two natures: applehood and pearhood, though I have but one life and am but one tree.

If we apply this humble comparison to the sublime mystery of the Incarnation, we may say that Christ's humanity is engrafted on the divine personality. It receives life, being and existence itself from God, not merely by creation, but by participation, and none the less, it always remains pure manhood. Its essence or nature is not changed, although it accepts its existence or subsistence from God the Son; yet God the Son and that human nature constitute one single person in two natures, one single being which is divine in existence, but divine and human in nature, one single Christ, who is both God and man.

To speak of Christ's human nature being engrafted on God is, of course, to use an inadequate and perhaps clumsy metaphor. This metaphor, if stressed too much, might even be misleading, but it can also serve a good purpose as a faint adumbration in the material world of a higher reality in the supernatural and spiritual world.

There is another comparison which has aided many people in understanding of the mystery of the union of the two natures. Once more it is only a comparison, only an analogy, and must not be too far pressed. Every comparison fails in some point. But it is a comparison which is sanctioned in the Church's liturgy, for it occurs in the Athanasian creed.

As the rational soul and the body is one man, so God and man is one Christ. Soul and body, matter and spirit combine in man to form one single person, who is at once material and spiritual. My soul is I, but my body is likewise I, as long as life lasts. At death it ceases to be I, because it is no longer matter owned, controlled,

possessed, and constituted in its specific human reality, by my soul. My body is not merely the house in which my soul dwells, as in a foreign tenement. It is not merely the vesture or clothing of my soul. It is actually I myself. He that hurts my body hurts me; he that cherishes my body cherishes me. The deeds of my body—seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling—are my deeds. At death I shall cease in a sense to be my complete self, until at the resurrection I, that is, my imperfect self, my soul, shall resume the body and I shall again be completely “man,” and no longer a being imperfect and shorn of some of its proper nature, a disembodied human soul. All this helps us to realize that in us two principles of reality meet, the spiritual and the material. Body and soul are welded together in so close a union that they constitute one single individual being, a “man.” This is the closest union of two principles of reality which we know on earth, and it helps us a little to understand the mystery of the Incarnation. Christ is one single subsistent reality in which the person of God the Son is wedded to a human nature. Christ and God the Son are not TWO, but ONE; there is a faint analogy in the way my body and my soul are not two things, but one thing, *man*.

On the other hand, we must never forget that this is only a comparison, and that there remain essential points of difference between the mystery of the union of the natures in Christ and the union of body and soul in man. In man this union produces a compound nature, for it is the union of two principles of reality, of which each is imperfect, and which coalesce in a higher unity,

the human. In Christ the union is between two complete natures, which do not coalesce into a third complete and compound nature.

In Christ there is no coalescing of the human with the divine, so as to produce a third something, a divine-human nature. The two natures do not compound, but they are united by the personality of the first. The divine person extends His subsistence, individuality, or personality, to the human nature, and thus constitutes it in the realm of reality. ☩

## 2. *Only the Second Person of the Trinity Is Man*

The Catholic Faith teaches us not only that God became man, but that it is God the Son, not God the Father or the Holy Ghost, who became man. Let us consider this precise aspect of our faith. In considering it, we cannot but enter on another field of research, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. As this present treatise deals with the Incarnation, we must restrict ourselves by accepting as proved and explained certain theses of the treatise on the Trinity.

We believe that God is one, that He is one, single, individual, concrete, infinite, immutable nature and reality, undivided and indivisible, utterly one. Yet this one, infinite, concrete, reality is held, or possessed, in a threefold way. It exists in Three Persons—Father, Son and Holy Ghost. These three, though completely distinct, subsist in one and the same concrete being and nature of God. There is but one God, and the Father is that one and only God, as underived, and unbegotten, as source and origin of the other two Persons. He is the

Original of which the Son is the image, and is, jointly with the Son, the source of the Holy Ghost. The Son, too, is that one and only God, but as derived and begotten from the Father as the image and utterance of the Father, and jointly with the Father the source of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is that same one and only God, but as derived and breathed out by the Father and the Son and thus the fulfilment and completion of the Godhead.

Thus much we accept and take over as explained and understood from the treatise on the Trinity.

Father, Son and Holy Ghost are distinct persons, though they share the same concrete individual nature. Of this mystery we have no parallel or analogy whatever on earth. Three human persons share the same generic nature of manhood, but not the identical concrete nature of *this* manhood. Peter, Paul and John are three distinct persons, but they are also three distinct men. If all three, though remaining completely distinct, had one and the same manhood, we should have a parallel to the Trinity, in which Father, Son and Spirit are distinct, yet are the same God. The mystery is completely beyond our understanding, but God has revealed it and we accept it as true.

Now in the mystery of the Incarnation it has been further revealed that God the Son alone, and not the Father or the Spirit, has become man.

What does this mean?

First of all we must be quite certain about this. Although, within the Godhead, Fatherhood, Sonship and Spirithood are distinct, yet all the works of God *outwards—ad extra*, as the theologians say—are com-

mon to the three Persons. All that is created is equally the effect of the three Persons in the Godhead. All created things are the limited termini of the infinite power of God. The Father does nothing "outwards" which the Son and the Spirit do not also do. There is nothing in this Universe whose existence is due to one Person alone, without being due to the Other Divine Persons. Even the Sacred Manhood of Christ, as a work of God "outwards," as something created and distinct from the Godhead, is the effect of the Creative Will of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. God the Son did not create a human nature by Himself alone, without the concurrence of the two Other Persons. As a creative act it is common to all Three. How, then, is God the Son alone man? Because He alone is the personality which completes or terminates, and gives subsistence to, Christ's human nature. He alone assumed it unto Himself, He alone possesses it as His own. The infinite divine act of existence, which is God, extends towards and holds the Human Nature and constitutes it in the realm of reality; but God, who does so, is God as Son, not the First or the Third, Person in the Blessed Trinity.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. The Word is God the Son.

This is utterly mysterious to us. St. Bonaventure has a simple, tender, and gracious similitude, which may aid us a little in grasping what is meant. He represents three virgins occupied in vesting a bride for her nuptials, but one of the three virgins is the bride herself; hence, though all three are equally occupied, yet one alone is clothed in the bridal garment. So, says the

saint, the Godhead was vested with our humanity, all Three Persons concurred in one common operation in vesting God the Son with this robe with which He alone is vested. He therefore is vesting Himself, while Father and Holy Ghost are vesting Him.

### 3. *God the Son Did Not Change at the Incarnation*

Perhaps an inquisitive mind might ask: Did not then, at the Incarnation, at least God the Son change by becoming man, whereas we know that God is immutable and changeless? In speaking of God the Son assuming, holding, and possessing a human nature, of the Word *becoming* man, we of necessity use human expressions which seem to involve a change in God the Son, as if He were beginning to be what He was not before. But this is due to our imperfection of speech and thought. With us all activity means change. It is not so with God. The created thing indeed begins to be, but its relation to God as Cause establishes nothing new in God. If the questioner insists that at least in the Incarnation God the Son became something He was not before, we would remind him that though we use the phrase "extending the act of existence to the human nature," we must not be misunderstood. We are hampered by the limitation of language. The infinite cannot extend beyond itself, for unto the infinite there is nothing "beyond." The infinite "includes" but does not "extend."

The Sacred Humanity of Christ began to be included in the act of existence of God the Son, the Humanity of Christ became actualized and individualized by the union to the Person of God the Son, but God the Son

did not change. A child may run to its mother and nestle in her bosom, but the mother does not therefore necessarily change. When the Manhood of Christ leapt into being, it nestled in the bosom of the Godhead, for its personality, the most intrinsic constituent part of its own self, was God the Son. None the less, God the Son did not change because the Manhood began to be in the embrace of His own Personality. It is true, the divine Personality, notwithstanding His own impenetrability, seized, penetrated, and immersed Himself in the human nature, and thus became and now is God-incarnate, God-man. But it is the Manhood which is thus pervaded and penetrated, thus invaded and held, by the Infinite Person without shadow or shade of alteration in the Godhead.

A humble comparison may perchance not be out of place, though all comparisons are feeble and utterly inadequate. When the magnet is joined to the iron, it is the iron that undergoes the change, being held and gripped by the magnet. The magnet does not—at least apparently—change, or receive modification, by the iron coming within the ambit of its attractive force. The magnet unites the iron to itself without—at least perceptible—alteration. It is the iron which from a dull cold state becomes magnetized, and begins to be what it was not. Thus in the Incarnation a human nature was created, and in being created was assumed to the Person of God the Son, who united it to Himself for ever. God the Son thus became man, though He did not alter.

## IV

### CHRIST'S KNOWLEDGE

#### 1. *Man's Threefold Knowledge*

Man is capable of a threefold knowledge. By an entirely supernatural and divine gift, a gift which exceeds all man's natural needs and powers, a gift which through God's free and infinite bounty will be bestowed on the just in heaven, man will be capable of seeing God face to face, even as He is in Himself.

The possibility of this knowledge is a great mystery. This mystery has been revealed to us in God's promise of the Beatific Vision to man. We cannot here enter into further explanations. It is discussed at length in my book (*What Becomes of the Dead*). Suffice it to say that this knowledge, though finite, as the act of a created being must ever be, is a direct and immediate perception of the Infinite God without any intermediary whatever.

The next kind of knowledge which man can possess is infused knowledge such as God naturally gives to Angels and sometimes, supernaturally, to some Saints on earth. It is called intuitive, because it is obtained by no process of reasoning, but, as it were, at a glance, by a flash of intelligence. This knowledge is natural to Angels, but not so to man. When given to man, it is called infused, because it is not obtained by the exercise of his natural human powers, but is poured into his

mind from without by a miraculous intervention of God. Prophets, Saints and Seers knew things which no human endeavour could have made known to them, but which God by direct action on their minds caused them to know.

Lastly, man has his natural knowledge, which he acquires by experience during his life in this world. This normal knowledge increases as years advance, as through his senses his contact with the outer world continues, and through his power of reasoning he makes progress in the way of truth.

Apart from Christ's infinite knowledge as God, Christ's human soul on earth possessed this threefold knowledge as man.

## *2. Christ's Possession of the Beatific Vision*

Christ's soul on earth saw God face to face. No mortal man while on earth has ever seen God except Jesus Christ. When Jesus spoke to the Jews about His divine Father, He spoke to them not as of One Whom He only knew in the obscurity of an act of faith, One in Whom His human soul merely believed, but as of One Whom He saw face to face. He could say to the Pharisees: "Ye have not known Him, and if I should say, I know Him not, I should be like unto you, a liar: but I know Him and keep His word." Christ is here evidently speaking as man, and in His human nature, for only as man can He be said to "keep His Father's word," only as man had He said just before: "If I honour myself, my honour is nothing, it is my Father that honoureth me, of whom you say, that he is your God."

St. Leo the Great, the doctor of the mystery of the Incarnation, told us with majestic precision fifteen hundred years ago that, "as the divine nature, one and unchangeable, is ever complete in Its own essence, never either lessening or increasing, so likewise It beatified the human nature which It assumed in order that His glorified nature should always remain in the embrace of Him who glorified it." Indeed, given the fact of the personal union of the human nature of Christ with God the Son, it stands to reason that that human nature by the gift of the Beatific Vision should see God face to face.

Personal union is unspeakably greater than Beatific Vision, and one cannot imagine that God should grant the greater and not the less. In the abstract perhaps it is possible for God to assume a human nature and give to His human mind only the obscure knowledge of faith, not of sight: it is difficult to argue about the abstract possibilities of God's absolute power in a mystery like this. It seems, however, so incongruous and is so abhorrent from the common belief of the Catholic Church, that no Catholic could safely hold such an extraordinary opinion. Christ's Beatific Vision has been so obvious to all, that within the Church no heretical view has ever arisen about this point, and hence it has never as yet been defined by Pope or Council in solemn definition. If we held the opposite, we should have to give way to strange and repellent imaginings. We should have to imagine that Christ as man in His human mind knew indeed that His human nature was not self-subsistent, and had no human per-

sonality, but that He would not, as man, directly see or know but only believe in the Person, who had assumed His nature.

The obvious and the only way the Church has ever known of conceiving the mystery is that Christ's human soul on earth always saw the face of God as the Blessed do in heaven. In God Christ saw that His nature was possessed and held by God, and was God's own. His divine Person was so united to His human nature and so pervaded it, that by the necessity of intrinsic congruity He bestowed upon it what we hope He will bestow upon us in a lesser degree, when after this life we shall see His unveiled Majesty.

True, great difficulties remain, but mysteries must always remain in the divine revelation that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

### *3. Compatibility of Sorrow with the Beatific Vision*

Christ saw the face of God; how then could He suffer? Is not the sight of God face to face called the Beatific Vision or blissful sight, and does it not render those who possess it perfectly blessed and happy? If Christ's soul was steeped in the inebriating happiness of the immediate enjoyment of God, how could He say at the entrance of the garden of Gethsemane: "My soul is sorrowful unto death"?

The mystery is indeed great. Perhaps we can dimly see how He could undergo physical pain, how the nails would still hurt, and the burning thirst still torment, even though His soul was with God, but how could His soul itself be sorrowful unto death, how could He cry

over Lazarus His friend, and Jerusalem His city; how could He feel sadness and indignation at Judas' kiss, since His soul possessed the supreme happiness of the Beatific Vision?

It is a problem which no one has ever fully solved, and which is perhaps insoluble for us here on earth, because it enters into the very essence of the mystery of the Incarnation, and therefore must always escape even the utmost endeavours of our mind during our mortal pilgrimage.

Let us, however, in deep reverence try to enter into the innermost sanctuary of the human soul of Christ, and see whether perhaps our humble endeavours to understand may bear some fruit.

Christ in His agony was sorrowful unto death, so that great drops of His blood fell to the ground in Gethsemane, and yet Christ's soul saw the face of God, and this blissful sight suffused His soul with unspeakable happiness.

When the Blessed in heaven see God, they can sorrow no more. It stands written of them: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away."

Christ's soul was closer to God than theirs, His happiness immeasurably deeper than theirs, but by a unique dispensation of God's Providence Christ had still a mortal body and was surrounded by the sorrows of life. Indeed He was "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was smitten of God and afflicted. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for

our sins." "He saw the travail of His soul," when "He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, when the chastisement of us all was laid upon Him." We have dealt already with the meaning of Christ's cry on the Cross. Most readers will find in the consideration of those words at least some aid in studying the mystery of sorrow in Christ's soul. If we must deal with the matter in an abstract and more technical way, we would say that the act of seeing God and the act of enjoyment of final consummated human happiness are not identical. Christ's possession of the former does not prove His possession of the latter.

(The Blessed before the Day of Judgment possess the Beatific Vision, yet they are not completely, finally happy with the utmost measure of happiness till they possess their bodies after the Resurrection, because they have not come to the complete consummation of their manhood, owing to this very lack of body. This shows that the Beatific Vision is compatible with some unfulfilled desire, with some lack of happiness. It is therefore in itself possible to see God and have sorrow.) The sorrow would arise, not of course from seeing God, but from seeing oneself still in some sense exposed or accessible to evil and pain. To see the Creator is in itself not the same as to see His creation, though creation be mirrored in Him. The sight of God gives essential happiness, but this happiness may not be totally consummated, owing to some imperfection in the state of him who receives it.

If someone could comprehend God fully, then of course he would share fully God's own divine happiness,

but no finite intelligence, not even Christ's human mind, can comprehend God fully. Christ indeed had the Beatific Vision in a higher degree than any of the Seraphim and Cherubim, but even His knowledge did not encompass and completely grasp God. Between the infinite and the finite there ever must be an infinite distance.

Christ's mind was vast beyond that of any other created intelligence. It is the common teaching in the Catholic Church that Christ knew all God's actual creation, past, present and future, and thus Christ also saw Himself as man in the Beatific Vision, and He saw Himself in exile here below. For God assumed a human nature, not in consummated glory, but in its pilgrim-state. His human nature was, through the mortality and passibility of its body, still an exile from heaven and a sojourner on earth, and subject to all the woes our fallen nature is liable to. The Beatific Vision did indeed make Christ essentially happy with the happiness of the Blessed, but mirrored in the divinity Christ saw His own assumed human nature as it then was, shorn of the fulness of its glory, in its earthly and mortal state. He saw it accessible to manifold ills; pains of the body, and torments on the Cross, pains of soul: the bereavement of friends, the ingratitude of those who shared human nature with Him, the sight of the sufferings of those whom He loved.

Let no one conclude that Christ while on earth suffered because He did not know the solution of the problem of evil, or was ignorant of the gracious plans of God's redemption; or because He did not know in the Beatific Vision that for Him as pilgrim on earth

the possibility of sorrow was not yet excluded. When Christ after death entered into His glory all sorrow ended, because the light of glory showed Him in God that, though sin is evil, it no longer approached Him, and was therefore no evil to Him, for He had gone beyond the limitations of earthly life. Was then Christ's sadness an imperfection of His soul? No, it was the highest perfection, in that state of human nature which He deigned to assume, and His very sadness was a manifestation of His holiness in presence of evil, and proof of the reality of His manhood, exiled on earth. That He deigned to see evil, even as we see it on earth, and to be saddened by it, is due to the depth of His condescension to the children of men. Had He not done so, had He not taken a passible and mortal nature, His earthly life would have been a make-believe, and though He would still have been man, He would not have been like unto us here on earth.

But we have perhaps presumed to search too deeply into the hallowed secrets of Christ's inner life.

We know that however fierce the storms that beat upon the surface of Christ's human soul, however high the waves of sorrow that arose in His Sacred Heart, the innermost depth of His human nature was in utmost peace and joy. His whole being was rooted in the Godhead, God the Son embraced it and held it in personal union, and His whole being was illuminated by the heavenly light of God's unveiled Face.

Both Christ's sorrows and His joys were great beyond what we can express or conceive. How they once co-existed in the human soul of God the Son we can fully learn only hereafter.

#### 4. *Christ's Infused Knowledge*

Besides the Light of Glory, theologians usually hold that Christ possessed infused knowledge. That is to say, He did not merely see things mirrored in God, but He knew things as they were in themselves, and He knew them through a special gift from God granting Him this knowledge. It was foretold of Him in the Prophet (Isaias xi, 2): "the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge . . . and of the fear of the Lord." These gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge rested on His human soul in their plenitude, and by virtue of these gifts He knew all things through and through. He possessed knowledge even of the hidden secrets of God's Providence in so far as such knowledge was needed for the work of the Redemption and was becoming to the human soul of God. In this knowledge He could read the thoughts of men as an open book, and the story of the past, the present and the future was to Him like a scroll, unfolded to the end. As God-man He had a claim to the most perfect knowledge of which His soul was capable, and as this claim is based on the fact of the personal union of that soul with God, He possessed it from the first moment of the Hypostatic Union, and the Babe of Bethlehem was wiser than a plenary council of all the angels of God.

Error and ignorance do not befit God, even in His human nature. That Christ could have erred about anything whatever is repudiated by our Christian conscious-

ness as unbeseeming the dignity and veracity of God the Son.

The double gift of the Beatific Vision and of supernatural infused knowledge Christ possessed from the first moment of the Incarnation. He possessed it even in His Mother's womb, for this knowledge is the natural outcome and accompaniment of the union itself of the human nature to the Person of God. It was therefore complete from the beginning and incapable of increase.

### *5. Christ's Natural Human Knowledge*

There was, however, a third kind of knowledge which Christ possessed, which grew and waxed in intensity and extent during the years of His mortal life, from His birth to His death. This is mere natural, experimental, human knowledge. The Babe saw and learnt to recognize things around Him, the Babe heard and gradually learnt the language of His Mother, the Babe stretched out His hands and by touching things began to know their nature and their properties. The Boy learnt the carpenter's trade from Joseph, His foster father. The Man of Nazareth travelled through Judea, Galilee and Samaria and got to know cities and scenes, men and women, in a way He had not known them before. Because of this progress in merely human knowledge He could ask and learn, He could marvel and feel surprise and disappointment. He was truly human, and without such real increase of knowledge His life upon earth would have been utterly unlike ours, and a pretence from babyhood to death.

It is quite true that He could never err, not even in

this merely experimental knowledge, for to err does not belong to the essence of human nature on earth, and to err is against the dignity of a Divine Person. The proverb indeed says that to err is human, but the proverb speaks of fallen nature, wounded by sin, and therefore liable not merely to ignorance but to mistake and error. The proverb speaks of human nature as we historically know it in ourselves and our neighbours, not of perfect sinless human nature as God meant it to be.

But how could Christ's mind at once know and not know? How could He know a thing mirrored in the Godhead through the Beatific Vision and by infused intuitive knowledge and yet at the same time not know it with ordinary human knowledge? This must remain a mystery to us. We on earth have only one mode and method of knowledge. We cannot imagine what it is to have two or three. Our reason tells us that there can be other kinds of knowledge than our own, but what another kind of knowledge is like, and how it co-exists in the mind together with ordinary knowledge, we cannot say, for we have no experience of it, and it is completely beyond what we can picture to ourselves.

St. Paul or St. Theresa might help us perhaps a little. St. Paul was caught up into the third heaven and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter. God had granted him knowledge of another than the ordinary kind, whether in the body or out of the body, St. Paul knew not. Merely human knowledge can be somehow expressed in human speech, however inadequate, but what St. Paul had seen was beyond utterance. Even if St. Paul had found words, we could not have understood.

St. Theresa and other Saints sometimes saw Christ and His Mother and the Blessed in heaven, but when these privileged Saints were asked precisely what they saw, the features of Christ, and His stature or the colour of His garments, they often smiled and said they had not seen Him in that way, they just knew, knew His Presence, His Glory and His Word, but they did not know it in our way.

On Easter morning the risen Christ, so it is piously believed, was first made manifest to His Blessed Mother. Yet Scripture says that He first appeared to Mary Magdalen. The manifestation to His Mother must therefore have been of another kind. The Magdalen and the women and the apostles touched Christ's hands and His feet, but there are higher kinds of knowledge still. When, later on, His Mother also saw Him with her bodily eyes, she indeed rejoiced too with the other apostles, for by a new avenue she then approached the reality of her risen Son, whereas in a more sublime way she had known her risen Son already.

Some remote analogy can perhaps also be found in our more humble experience. Imagine an architect who has drawn the minutest plans of a building, has specified all the materials, determined every line and curve and colour of the house to be erected, but who is prevented from seeing the building during its erection. Years later he has at last the chance of seeing the house he built. On approaching it he can say: "I know it already: in a sense there is nothing new for me to know. I know the number and the colour of the bricks, the thickness of the wood, the number, size and place of the nails. I know the shape of the windows and their

location. I know every lock and every hinge; in fact, I know the house better than the man who lives in it, for I conceived it and the building as it stands is but the realization of my thought." Yet almost every architect in such a case would walk up to the house with interest and pace through every corridor and room. On leaving he would say: "I knew it before, but I have added to my knowledge, for now I know it in another way."

This example is not quite similar to Christ's manifold knowledge. From the nature of the case there cannot be an exact parallel to Christ's different ways of knowing. Still, this example may aid us a little to realize that there was nothing artificial or unnatural in Christ's human life, that in no sense whatever was it a pretence, or like the playing of a part in a theatre, where one's rôle is learnt by heart. With eager anticipation, through marvel and pain and sorrow, with free deliberation, moving forward step by step, Christ walked through this valley of tears, through this land of exile, till He could say: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now glorify thou me, Father, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was made."

#### *6. Christ's Knowledge of the Day of Judgment*

But does not Christ, at least in one specified instance, clearly and unmistakably admit ignorance? Speaking of the Day of Judgment, does He not acknowledge: "Of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father"? Granted

that the words refer not to Christ in His divine nature, which is omniscient, they refer to Him at least in His human nature, and seemingly no words could be a plainer acknowledgment of ignorance than the words of this text. The answer is simple. Christ did not know it with specifically human, and therefore communicable, knowledge.

Now this answer must not be misunderstood. It does not mean that Christ used a mental reservation, as if He really knew, but was not allowed to tell, and therefore by some "economy of truth" said the thing that was not; said "I do not know," meaning only that He did know, but would not tell; perhaps somewhat in the way in which a priest, being asked a question touching the secret of the confessional, would boldly say: "I do not know." Such is not the meaning of Christ's words. A priest who would, to shield the secrecy of the confessional, say, "I do not know," has all the same in his normal human consciousness, normal human knowledge, acquired through normal human intercourse, of the fact which he says he does not know. The priest may be justified in his utterance. That is not the point here.

The case with Our Lord is totally different.

He not only knew by different sources of information, but His knowledge was actually of different kinds. The Beatific Vision and the knowledge of things mirrored in the Beatific Vision is one thing. Infused intuitive knowledge such as the angels have is a different thing. Finally, normal human acquired knowledge gathered from sense-data, and extended by reasoning, is again

a different thing. It is true, all three kinds of knowledge did exist in the same human mind of Christ as its subject, but this does not alter the fact. Now, knowledge of the higher kind may be unutterable, incommunicable in the lower, specifically human knowledge.

Christ possessed in His normal human consciousness, first, those things which He had acquired by normal human endeavour, and next, all those things which were communicated from His higher modes of knowledge. These things alone were utterable and communicable to others, and thus could be revealed by Christ to His fellow-men.

One may object: "If the end of the world is to come on the 31st of December, 1998, and Christ knew the date, why could He not tell?" We answer that historic dates in past and future are names for moments in the time series of things here below, but in God there is no time series. God sees all things in the eternal now. Through the Beatific Vision things are seen in God as in a mirror. The human mind that sees the last day in the everlasting present of God, knows it indeed in that supernatural mode of knowledge, but we cannot argue that the same mind must therefore know it in normal human knowledge and be able to communicate his knowledge to his fellow-men. "Of that day no man knows, not even the Son," expresses truth and fact, and is not a deceptive statement. During Christ's mortal life, not all knowledge which was in the higher regions of His soul flowed over into His normal human life as wayfarer upon this earth. Hence as mere man (outside that sphere of beatific and infused knowledge

which was the necessary outcome of the Incarnation) He did not know some things, as for instance the date of the Day of Judgment, though He knew them as God, and knew them even as man in a supernatural mode of knowledge. According to the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, which is adopted by St. Thomas and the Scholastics, and is endorsed by modern thinkers, and indeed is the expression of common sense, there is nothing in the human intellect which has not in the first instance been derived from the senses. The specific activity of the human mind is precisely to work on sense-data, and from those data to build up, through judgments and reasonings, ever-increasing knowl-

Now Christ was truly man. If He had not exercised this specific activity of the human mind, He would not have been truly man. However great Christ's knowledge through the Beatific Vision and through infusion, it remained knowledge of a different kind from the specifically human knowledge. Though existing in Christ's mind as in its subject, it was not itself specifically human knowledge, and without another avenue to reality, viz., the avenue of the senses and the reasoning built thereon, Christ's life would not have been human, like ours. Now we know that Christ was "found in habit as man"; therefore He knew in our ordinary human way of knowing. But in such ordinary human way He did not know the date of the Day of Judgment.

We are always tempted to think that the different spheres of knowledge are only different in the category of the objects known, whereas they differ also in the very mode of knowing. These things are difficult for

us to follow, because they are beyond the sphere of our own experience. But given the possibility of different modes of knowledge, our reason can see that a thing may be unknown in a lower sphere though known in the higher, and that even while Christ's soul and conscience remained an absolute unity, Christ could truly know and yet also in another sense not know the Day of Judgment.

It is remarkable that after the Resurrection, in answer to the query of the Apostles regarding the future, Christ only answers: "It is not *yours* to know!" All knowledge was then completely His, even in His normal, natural consciousness and in a human way.

# V

## CHRIST'S WILL

Christ possessed two wills, a divine will because He was God, and a human will because He was man.

Christ's human will was free, but Christ knew no sin. Both statements are obvious. If Christ's human will was not free, He was not really man; if Christ knew sin, He was not really God, for no divine person can sin.

### 1. *Christ's Free Will and Temptation*

Christ had no original sin, for His human nature was united to the Godhead, and therefore necessarily supremely pleasing to God. Christ suffered in His human nature only those consequences of original sin which do not themselves involve sin. (Christ submitted to pain, sorrow and death because of Adam's sin,) but He did not suffer from weakness of mind and consequent ignorance, nor from weakness of will and consequent proneness to evil, the two sad results of original sin in our fallen nature. Christ therefore felt no internal temptation to anger or other sinful desire. Christ certainly felt anger, but it was never an uncontrollable passion; it was holy indignation. Christ felt human love, tenderness and affection, but never any sensual and degrading desire.)

Christ could be tempted, but only by external sug-

gestion, not internally by the weakness of nature. We men, alas! often dally with temptation. It costs us an inward struggle to overcome it, because we feel within us the power of its attraction. When temptation comes to us, either through the verbal suggestion of someone else, or through the written word or through something we see or hear, or through an image floating across our consciousness, we but rarely repel it instantly and with immediate horror, without feeling a secret hankering after it.

What happens to us but rarely was always and necessarily true in the case of Our Blessed Lord. What is only rare happiness to us was the perpetual frame of mind of Our Lord. The devil took Him into the desert, and the Gospel tells us of a threefold temptation there, but the suggestions of the Evil One never caused within Christ's soul what we generally feel (I mean that swaying to and fro of the will, conscious of the magnetism exercised upon it by the evil thing, that uncertainty and anxiety lest the will should be overcome, that inward painful effort of the will to maintain itself in goodness, to free itself of the baneful influence, and thus to conquer oneself as well as the evil thing without). The evil was indeed proposed to Our Lord; His human soul, as it were, gazed at it, and understood it. He realized it as a possible object which a human will might desire, and then, exercising His own will, He instantly cast it out as something which He did not will.

But if Christ could not possibly sin, how had He free will? We answer that God cannot sin, yet God is supremely free, hence the fact that Christ's human

nature could not sin is no proof that it was not free. Possibility of sinning does not belong to the essence of freedom. Possibility of sinning is rather a deficiency of freedom and a failure of free will. We men on earth are still liable to sin, because we can still fail to put evil before our eyes in its true colours and see it as it is. We put it before us under the guise of good, and this *seeming* good we desire, (for evil as evil no one can desire.) It is this wilful disguising of evil as good and making it the object of our will, though we are conscious that, for all its momentary power to please, it ultimately works evil, that constitutes our sin. (Sin is deliberate self-deception,) and Christ's human nature was too perfect to be deceived. The Saints in heaven cannot sin, because they see God face to face. Christ could not sin, since He not only saw God face to face, but was united to Him in person.

## 2. *Christ's Free Will and Merit*

But if Christ could not sin, how could He merit? Does not our redemption depend on Christ's power to merit it for us? Certainly it does. But let us see what Christ could merit. Christ could not merit the future Beatific Vision or possession of God as final reward, because Christ always had the Beatific Vision. He possessed God from the very first instant of the creation of His human soul. No one can merit what he already has. What Christ could merit for Himself was the consummation of His happiness by the glorification of His body.

"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to

do, and now glorify thou me, Father, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made"; so Christ prayed. 

The glory which Christ had with His Father before the world was made was the glory of His divine personality. During Christ's mortal life on earth He was shorn of the glory which naturally befitted His human nature on account of His Personality. His earthly life earned for His human nature entrance into consummated glory, not for His soul only—for He possessed this already—but for His complete manhood, inclusive of His body. This glory befitted Him as God-man, and of this glory Peter, James and John had a momentary glimpse on the Mount of the Transfiguration.

For us Christ merited forgiveness of sin, redemption and everlasting happiness. But Christ merited for others in a different way from that in which He merited for Himself.

One merits for oneself directly by a kind of efficient causality, rendering oneself worthy to receive the reward. Christ could not indeed render His divine Person more worthy of glory, but He could by His earthly life earn for His human nature an additional title to glory.

One merits for others by a kind of exchange in justice, giving to God a good deed that God may give some good to those on whose behalf the good deed was done. Thus Christ merited for us by offering the infinite merits of His earthly life that God might give us grace and final salvation. There ensued a true exchange in justice, God bestowing on us what Christ had truly earned. Possibly one may still ask: "But how could Christ merit at all,

seeing that He could not sin? The Saints in heaven cannot merit, because they see the face of God, and can sin no more; how then could Christ merit?"

The answer is really simple. True, the Saints in heaven cannot sin, because they are no longer on earth and have reached their final end. Their soul sees God and their body has ceased to exist till the general Resurrection; that is the reason why they can merit no longer. Christ on earth was not like the Saints in heaven; He had still a mortal body, and in so far was in the state of a wayfarer towards His final end. He was an exile on earth as far as His complete human nature went, although His soul had the Beatific Vision. Thus He could gain by His earthly life the reward He wished to purchase by His infinite merits. The impossibility of sin does not destroy the possibility of merit, for it leaves the freedom of the will in all things except the avoidance of sin, and merit can be gained in a thousand ways beyond the avoidance of sin.

### *3. Christ's Free Will and the Father's Command*

There remains this obvious difficulty: if God had given to Christ the strict positive command to die on the Cross, then Christ, whose human soul always saw the face of the Father, was under an absolute necessity of obeying that command. Disobedience to a strict command was totally impossible to Christ, for Christ could not sin. But if Christ was under an absolute necessity in this matter, He had not free will in this respect, and consequently He was not really obedient, for no one is obedient in a matter which he is compelled

to do by internal compulsion. Therefore Christ's death, not being free, was not meritorious, and we are not redeemed by the merits of the death of Christ.

All this sounds very formidable, but it is less formidable than it sounds. It is indeed a difficulty, but not an insuperable one. What is a strict command—a command, I mean, under pain of sin? A course of action which is so intrinsically connected with a man's obtaining his ultimate end that, unless it be followed, he cannot obtain that end. Sin is a turning away from one's ultimate end. But the will of God is not always a command in this particular sense. There is a will of God which is called "will of complacency," an absolute will indeed that something should happen, but not a will that intrinsically connects its occurrence with the attainment of one's ultimate end.

A comparison may aid us in understanding this point, if we grasp the difference between commands and evangelical counsels. No one could reasonably doubt today that it was God's direct and absolute will that St. Theresa should be a Carmelite nun, or St. Gregory the Great a bishop, or St. Barnabas an apostle. Yet none of these persons had a command under sin to lead the lives they did. God absolutely willed that these persons should act as they acted, but He willed that they should choose this course of action of their own free will, without placing before them the choice between a nun's, or bishop's, or an apostle's life—and damnation; or even the choice between such a life and deviation from, and retardation of, their ultimate end. These things were never precepts or commands in this restricted sense: "Either do this or displease Me."

Even if St. Theresa, or St. Gregory, or St. Barnabas had the clearest insight into the future, and could realize God's Will as we now realize it after centuries, looking back on the position of their lives in the story of God's Church, still the evangelical counsels never became precepts to them. Even if St. Theresa, St. Gregory, or St. Barnabas had chosen the married state, it would have been no sin whatever in them. Granting even a direct revelation such as came to St. Paul, that God had destined him to the work of the apostolate, even so, this became no command under sin, but was still left to the untrammelled free choice of St. Paul, and his choice of the apostolate was eminently meritorious, and not merely the necessary avoidance of sin. In some such way, though Christ in His human soul fully knew God's absolute will of complacency in the scheme of Redemption, according to which He, Christ, should redeem the world by His death, He also knew that His human soul did not stand before the alternative —either to undergo the Passion or to lose the Beatific Vision.

In face of such a choice there would indeed not have been liberty. But the Heavenly Father willed the redemption to be by the completely free choice of Christ. Knowing this, Christ freely chose it. In consequence, Christ could be said truly to have "obeyed," and accepted a "command," as in ordinary parlance we speak of obeying a call to the religious life when we think it to be God's Will that such or such a person should be a nun or a priest. Christ of His own free will entered into the plans of God; though realizing that there was no intrinsic connection between His fulfilment of them

and the Beatific Vision. He fulfilled them not by intrinsic compulsion but of free choice. The highest and most noble obedience is to conform one's will to the superior, whether he strictly commands or whether he does not.

The explanation we have given is not the only possible one. Some grave theologians have thought that the Will of the Father was a command in the strictest sense, and that Christ was not free with regard to the mere fact of His death, but only with regard to the mode and circumstances of it. They ingeniously argue as follows: (anyone is accounted a true martyr who is slain out of hatred for the faith, though possibly he would not have escaped the violence of his foes, even if he had tried.) He becomes a martyr by his voluntary acceptance even of inevitable torments. If a martyr is offered his freedom on condition of his apostasy and he refuses, this may certainly enhance the merit, but if his liberty is not offered him, not even at the price of apostasy, and he willingly accepts inevitable death, he remains a martyr in the true sense of the word; for it is the internal act of the will which constitutes the character of the deed. Christ knew that the Father wished Him to die for the redemption of mankind, but so also the martyr knows that one day he is sure to die according to natural law. His freedom lies in accepting death here and now in these torments. Now Christ had complete command over His own life: "No one taketh my life from me, but I give it for the life of men." When Christ gave Himself up to His foes it was a free-will offering of His life for the salvation of men, how-

ever strict the Father's command to give His human life for His fellow-men, at any time, or in any circumstances.

This theory is also very attractive, and there are several others. However, let these suffice as attempted solutions of a problem of which we could only know the certain explanation if God deigned to reveal it to us.

#### 4. *Christ's Omnipotence and the Prayer of Petition*

The mystery is deepened and extended when we consider that Christ prayed: "Not my will but thine be done."

First we ask ourselves, "Could Christ really pray, as we do?" To which we must answer that He certainly could, for He was truly man (Prayer is worship, admiration, gratitude, petition.) Christ in His human nature prayed to His own divine person and the Father and the Holy Ghost. His human soul adoringly recognized that it was assumed by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and all the forces of that soul were employed in praising and loving the Person who assumed it unto Himself; in expressing gratitude for that divine assumption, and willingness to serve and obey God in all things; in asking for the glorification of His human nature, and in obtaining the redemption of His brethren and sisters according to the flesh.

Perhaps some one may say: "As there is only one Person in Christ, how can one Person pray to Himself?"

The answer lies in the very mystery of the Incarnation. A person with one nature only can only do what is proper to that one nature. We therefore cannot ask from ourselves, for the being which we ask from would

be the identical being which is asking. The asker and the asked would be utterly identical. Not so in Christ. He has two natures and does in each what is proper to that nature. Christ as man is not in every respect identical with Christ as God, for the natures are not identical, though the Person is. This is hard to understand, but how could we expect to fathom the union between an infinite person and a finite nature, considering that we ourselves are only finite? We can but faithfully cling to the revelation that is given to us. We must hold fast that Christ is truly man. Now, a man who could not pray would not be a real man. Moreover, the Scriptures again and again tell us in so many words that Christ prayed: "He went out into a mountain to pray; and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God" (Luke vi, 12); "And he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray. . . . And . . . he fell upon his face, praying and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt. . . . And being in an agony, he prayed the longer" (Matt. xxvi, 36, 39; Luke xxii, 43).

There is perhaps another thought which may aid us in facing this problem. The Scriptures tell us that Christ prayed to *His Father*; there is no explicit text to say that Christ prayed to *the Son*, that is, to His own personality. It is quite obvious, indeed, that as far as adoration and thanksgiving went, Christ's human soul worshipped the divinity, united with it in one Personality. Worship is the willing acknowledgment of someone's excellence. Christ's human soul willingly acknowledged the infinite excellence of the divine Person that held it;

it knew its own utter dependence as a created nature on the Person of God the Son. As the Scriptures, however, speak of Christ's petitions to the Father, but not the Son or the Holy Ghost, it avoids what might appear *self-asking*, or a petition to one's self. Conceivably the possibility of petition in Christ arises from the fact that He is God the Son and therefore another Person than the Person to whom the petition is addressed. God the Son in His divine nature could not ask even the Father, for he that asks does not as yet possess that for which he asks, but God the Son possesses all things, for He possesses the divine nature. God the Son, however, in His human nature did not possess all things, and therefore could ask Another, God the Father, whose Son He is.

Be this as it may, it is a matter for our humble and devout contemplation to consider the vast and mighty soul of God-incarnate, absorbed in adoration, gratitude, acknowledgment of dependence and intensest supplication, prostrate before the Infinite Being of God. Christ in prayer gave God more glory than all created beings together ever had given, or could give, to their Creator. His prayer of petition obtained with irresistible efficacy whatever He asked. Christ was heard, so says St. Paul, because of the reverence due to Him.

### *5. The Agony in the Garden*

Was Christ's prayer always heard? Christ Himself gave the answer: "Father, I know thou hearest me always!" Even the prayer in Gethsemane is no exception. It would be a mistake to regard "this chalice" as

the torments and death on the Cross, and to think that He prayed to escape crucifixion and was refused. The chalice was the Agony in the Garden. He asked it to pass away and it passed away. The Father sent an angel from heaven to comfort him.

If we combine the words of the Evangelists, we can form the following account. He fell upon the ground on his face, praying that if it might be, the hour might pass from him, saying: "Father, all things are possible to thee; if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." The second time he went and prayed, saying: "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done." He prayed the third time, saying the selfsame words. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed the longer. And his sweat became drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.

In perhaps no passage of Scripture is Christ's human soul more completely unveiled than in this. "My soul," said He, on entering Gethsemane, "is sorrowful unto death." Christ was not given to exaggeration. His sorrow would have ended in death, even in the Garden, had He not decreed to die on Calvary. He was filled with fear and apprehension, repugnance, horror and aversion, sadness and depression. It seemed to overwhelm and overmaster Him. Why this sudden sorrow? It was, first of all, a free act of the divine Person restraining and inhibiting the flow of happiness which naturally flowed from His divine into His human nature through the Beatific Vision. Not indeed that this was a new act of

God the Son, for it was contained in the very assumption itself of a human nature, still in exile on earth, liable to pain and sorrow, destined to die for the sins of His brethren. The Beatific Vision indeed remained in the heights of Christ's intelligence, but the lesser powers of His human nature, unaided by miraculous help, shrank in unspeakable terror from the immediate future.

This sorrow was, secondly, an act of His human free will. In the supreme activity of His intellectual will He had long consented to His Passion and Death. But a man is not like an angel merely contemplating truth in the calm of the intellect and embracing it with a purely spiritual will. Manhood can suffer; man's whole nature can strive in agony against an evil, although his rational will remains firm. When Christ said, "Not my will but thine," He meant by "my will" not a decision of His intellectual free will, but the natural human tendency to avoid or overcome evil; the spontaneous irrepressible shrinking of His whole humanity from suffering. Nor, surely, should we think that this was merely shrinking from physical pain (Life is indeed sweet, and it is hard and bitter to die,) to die in the fulness of manhood at the age of thirty-three; to die in torments on a cross; to die after the scourging, the crowning with thorns, while the blows and the blood and the blinding spittle disfigured His face; after the stumbling, and falling under the load of the cross, after the piercing of hands and feet with the nails. Christ's imagination, vivid and strong, must have made Him realize fully all the cruel bitter details.

But His sorrow in the Agony was a shrinking, too, from mental torture. Christ was to be put to death by

His own people. He loved His people. He had cried over Jerusalem, that had not known the day of her visitation. He loved His people. He had sat in the cottages of the poor. He had eaten and drunk even with sinners. When He saw the crowd pale with hunger in the desert, He called His disciples together and said: "I have pity on the multitude; so easily led, so helpless against evil influences, so easily roused to anger or love." In the Garden a great pity wrung His soul; pity for the crowd that should cry out for His death, and pain that they should hate Him, who loved them so well. He looked beyond the crowd which surged round Him on Calvary to the multitude without number, throughout the centuries in all places, who should virtually clamour for His death by their sins. He saw the terrible army of Christ-haters marching through the ages to bring down from His height "the gaunt Galilean who has spoiled the sport of men." He saw, still further beyond, those who, notwithstanding His agony and pain, should encompass their own eternal death, and hear the final "Go away, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

When His eyes rested on His friends, His own followers, He saw Judas fumbling to find the halter for his suicide, He saw Peter in abject terror before a servant-maid, swearing that he did not know Him, and the Apostles hiding for fear of the Jews, and doubting even when the news of His rising came. He saw even the good with a myriad faults, unlovable, repulsive, selfish, quarrelsome, feeble and mean. And He saw His own Mother in tears standing beneath His cross, sinless and yet suffering.

Christ saw the whole tragedy of sin from the first day of the Fall to the final day of doom, and His soul became sorrowful unto death, for it was the tragedy of His brethren and sisters according to the flesh, of those "neighbours" whom He, alone among all the children of men, loved as He loved Himself.

# VI

## TWO PHRASES

### 1. *Christ's Cry on the Cross*

It may be useful if we discuss two of the most common difficulties that are raised against the truth of Christ's divinity as set forth in the New Testament.

People have found difficulty in the mysterious cry of Christ upon the cross: "God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Some have argued that it proved that Christ gave way to despair, and was thus obviously merely human. Believers have sometimes been puzzled as to what was the meaning of these words, and have sought an explanation in the supposition that Christ's human vision of God was obscured or overclouded, or that Christ bore the sins of all men, and thus realized Himself as the bearer of all iniquity, and as such forsaken by the Father.

The answer lies in the fact that Christ's words were clearly the first verse of the twenty-second psalm, and that for the meaning of those words they must read through the psalm referred to. They will see that the psalmist does not voice despair; that the psalmist does not suppose that he is forsaken by God in the sense of God having withdrawn His divine favour and grace, but only in the sense of abandoning him to the fury of his foes. They will see that it is a loving exhortation

to God in the midst of the mocking, jeering crowd who are causing the agony of the Sufferer. They will see that the predominant note of the psalm is one of complete trust in God, a tender clinging to His infinite goodness, and towards the end a peal of triumphant joy. The word "Why" with which the psalm opens is the natural cry of a human soul in great distress, surrendering indeed to God's blessed will, but wondering at the mysteriousness of God's plans and the strange ways of Providence that should require or allow such unexampled and unmerited pains in the hearts of those that love God. If the psalmist was not in despair when he began his psalm, why should Christ have been?

The whole tenor of the Gospels is against such an idea, for Christ is represented as full of the utmost confidence in God, and often rebuking His followers as men of little faith; and only the evening before His death bidding His disciples to be of good cheer, as He had overcome the world. Nothing can be more historically certain than that the authors of the Gospels who recorded the words in question did not see in them a cry of despair.

They make Christ threaten His persecutors with His return on the clouds of heaven only a few hours before; they make Christ promise Paradise in His company to the penitent thief on the cross; they make Christ commend His soul to His Father, and proclaim that all is fulfilled, and they make Him utter a mighty cry in dying, clearly as a sign of His power, though all the forces of His body had ebbed away. The Evangelists make it plain that they saw in the details of the Passion

the minute fulfilment of the prophecies. They actually quote Psalm 22 as being fulfilled; when therefore they put the first words of that psalm on Christ's lips, we may rest quite certain that it never occurred to them that these words implied despair, or lack of trust in God.

Therefore it is historically unsound to give those words a meaning which they did not convey to His own most intimate friends. Let this suffice for unbelievers.

Christians, however, have also searched with all reverence into the meaning of these great words of sorrow. Sometimes they have sought an explanation in the suggestion that Christ as God allowed in His human soul the vision of God to become clouded and overcast, that He in His human soul voluntarily passed through a time of darkness. Sometimes they have made the strange suggestion that, as Christ carried on His shoulders the sins of all the world, as the Great Substitute for sinners, for whom He made atonement, (He allowed Himself to feel the pain of the loss of God, as if He were alienated and separated from his heavenly Father.)

Such suggestions, however well meant, and though sometimes coming from the lips of pious persons, are most dangerous, because almost indistinguishable from a great misunderstanding. Christ even as man could not err. Never; and one might almost add, least of all on the cross. A feeling of alienation or separation from God would in Christ's soul have been a terrible illusion, if we understand it as a feeling that He was really separated from God, or that His divine Father was

angry with Him. Such a thing would be inconceivable and blasphemous, for Christ even in His agony knew who He was, and His soul was God's own soul, and He ever saw the face of His Father who was in heaven. "This is my dearly beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" was as true of Christ passing through the waters of death as of Christ standing in the waters of the Jordan, or being transfigured on Mount Thabor.

Christ was utterly innocent, and He knew that sin was intrinsically impossible to His innermost being. The guilt of sin cannot be transferred from one soul to another. Not even in the divine Atonement could the guilt of men's sins be transferred, for this would be not so much a blasphemy as an absurdity and palpable impossibility. Imprudent people have used such extravagant expressions as that Christ, willing to undergo the uttermost penalty of the sinner, allowed His soul to feel, as it were, the torments of hell.

They are strange and dangerous words, barely safeguarded by the expression "as it were." The essence of the torments of hell consists in the knowledge of alienation from God, but Christ's soul was never alienated from God, nor could He think that it was. Christ felt an unspeakable sadness, loathing and horror, at the innumerable sins of men, because of their intrinsic heinousness and ugliness, which revolted His God-owned soul and because of the punishment and degradation which they involved for His fellow-men, His own kith and kin according to the flesh, whom He loved with immeasurable love. He felt this most of all because they offended His Father, whom He loved and adored with

all the might of His being. No calamity ever so cast down a human soul as the fact of sin cast down the soul of Christ and steeped it in the deepest depth of bitterest sorrow. Christ on the cross so profoundly deplored sin that His mental agony must have far exceeded all bodily pains, and must have been the real cause of His death. On entering Gethsemane, He had protested that His soul was sorrowful unto death, and He entered then into an agony which would have ended in His death in the Garden but for direct divine intervention. On the cross after His cry: "O God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" the sorrow of His soul actually caused His bodily death.

We cannot easily realize that anyone should thus sorrow about another's sin, but sometimes even amongst mere men, people have been known to die out of sorrow for others. History may give us but few examples, yet there are some. A mother may pine away and die because of the disaster that befell her children; a husband may die because of the calamity that met the wife he loved. The contemplation of the pain of our fellow-men fills us all with sadness. How much more would the sight of the evil of sin and plight of His fellow-men fill Christ with sadness, as He alone fathomed the depth of that evil and He alone loved His fellow-men to the uttermost. His dread and revulsion, His supreme repudiation of sin, His indescribable sorrow and sadness, His cry of pity to His Father, His desire to make amends for the sins of His brethren and sisters according to the flesh, His willing death in their stead on the altar of divine justice; all these things constitute the Atonement.

But all this is surely totally different from any imagined undergoing of quasi-torments of hell, or illusion that the wrath of God rested on Him. Christ redeemed us precisely because He bore our punishment but not our guilt. *Christus innocens patri reconciliavit peccatores.*

How could Christ undergo this desolation, this lonesomeness or this abandonment and unutterable grief, if He were conscious of His personal union with God, who is everlasting happiness and bliss?

A complete answer we cannot give, for no man but Christ experienced personal union with God. However, men have been in union with God through sanctifying grace, and many saints have been in union with God through supernatural revelation. God has given great graces and illuminations to certain mystics, by which they were lifted to the third heaven like St. Paul. Such people, though their souls were flooded with supernatural happiness, have at the same time known great sorrows.

Martyrs on the eve of their supreme sacrifice, when their soul was in closest union with God, and when therefore they possessed that inward peace which surpasses all understanding, have none the less passed through long hours of deepest darkness of soul. Blessed Margaret Clitheroe showed a steadfastness in the faith, a completeness of self-surrender, a patience during incredible torments, which excite our amazement. Her love for God made her abandon her husband, her home, and her children, rather than be unfaithful to God. On the eve of her cruel martyrdom—she was bound in a sack and crushed to death at York for having harboured

priests—this Margaret passed the night in an agony of sorrow and dread, which must have been fearsome to behold. Prostrate for hours on the floor of her dungeon, she groaned in anguish and sorrow. Yet she knew that a word of apostasy from her lips would have restored her to her most happy home. If she did not say it, it was because her soul was so firmly rooted in God, so close in the embrace of His grace, that she preferred to die rather than lose His love. She knew, moreover, that after a few hours of martyrdom, however fierce, she would forthwith be rewarded with the happiness of the saints in heaven. Yet nothing of all this prevented her agony of dread, which was some faint renewal of the Agony of Christ in the Garden.

Blessed Margaret has not left us a description of her state of soul previous to her martyrdom, but many saints tell us that in their mystic states they combined unutterable happiness with unutterable sorrow. They could have died for sorrow, had not God prevented it, although they never lost that happiness which only God can give.

Such considerations may perhaps help us a little in our endeavour to understand Christ's blessed soul during His Passion. United as it was with the person of God the Son, it always possessed supernatural joy, yet this in no sense lessened the reality and fulness of its sorrows. Christ's soul has been compared to a high mountain, whose peak is in the still glow and glory of everlasting sunshine, while its base is beaten by the blackest storm.

As far as we can see, to some people death is easy,

to some it is very hard. Christ determined that He in His humanity would know the sum of all human sorrows; hence He determined that His death should be hard, that thus all should be helped by His example. The greatness of His agony He manifested in the words: "O God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

## 2. *Christ's Supposed Prediction of Immediate Return*

It is thought by many that Christ foretold His own return on the clouds of heaven immediately after His death and that in so doing He erred. Some indeed by a strange theological device would grant that He erred in His human knowledge, and still they would maintain His divinity in some sort of fashion. With these misguided persons we shall not deal at present. The bulk, however, of those who urge this difficulty, do so with the conviction that by proving Christ to have erred they have disproved His divinity.

Let it here suffice to give a brief answer. We shall do so in the form of a few questions.

Is it likely that He, who correctly foretold His own death, should have erred in foretelling what was immediately to follow it?

Is it likely that He, who foretold the fall of Jerusalem which took place forty years after His death, should have imagined His immediate return on the clouds of heaven, which did not happen?

Is it likely that His followers, who are said to have recorded this supposed false prediction, and who are supposed to have seen it falsified, should have encom-

passed the world with their preaching and have founded the Christian faith?

Is it likely that His followers should have put on record His words: "Of that day no one knoweth, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father," if Christ had predicted that He should return immediately after His death?

Is it likely that St. Paul should have written to the Thessalonians some twenty years after Our Lord's Resurrection: "We beseech you regarding the coming of Our Lord . . . that ye be not troubled, either by spirit, or by word or by epistle as from us, as if the day of the Lord were at hand, let no man beguile you in any wise!" if it were plain that the Lord had foretold His coming with any precision?

Is it likely that Our Lord, who said that "first the Gospel must be preached in the whole world," Our Lord, who spoke of "the times of the Gentiles," which would follow the rejection of Israel, when Israel should be led captive amongst all nations, supposed that all this would happen within a few years?

Is it likely that the many parables of Our Lord which indicate a long delay before His return and inculcate patient watchfulness—the parable of the tares and the wheat growing side by side till the end of the world, of the bridegroom tarrying till all slumbered and slept, of the servant who beat his fellow-servants because his master was long in coming, and a number of other parables—can be reconciled with a conviction that He was to return on the clouds of heaven forthwith after His death?

Is it likely that the solitary text which is quoted in support of Our Lord's imagined prophecy of immediate return: ". . . some of them that stand here . . . shall not taste death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" contains a meaning which contradicts the whole tenor of Our Lord's words in the Gospel? Is not the kingdom here mentioned the kingdom of which He gave the keys to St. Peter? the kingdom like a net catching good fish and bad, like ten virgins, five of whom were foolish and five wise, like a field containing good seed and bad: in fact, His kingdom on earth; that is, the Church which He built? Did not Christ manifestly enter into that kingdom during the lifetime of those who stood around Him when He uttered those words?

When Jerusalem had fallen and the Old Covenant had passed away and Christ's Church was spreading throughout the civilized world, had not Christ entered into His kingdom, that kingdom which is still with us and which shall never pass away?

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